



Spaniels

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IN THE FIELD



**SUMMERTIME
REFLECTIONS**

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE ENGLISH COCKER SPANIEL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP COMMITTEE

Dear Cocker Enthusiast,

Early January, I presented a proposal to the ECSCA Field Committee outlining the first Cocker Championship in 37 years to be held October 24-25, 1997. In this proposal I stated my belief that we were at an appropriate standard and support to stage a worthwhile championship. If we were to wait any longer, we would lose credibility and possibly, momentum. Art Rodger, in the previous issue of *Spaniels In The Field* had thrown down the gauntlet for us to act now.

The "Big Question" we've been debating is if we have achieved a level of field proficiency to assert our claim for a National Champion. And if that were so, did we have time and support to present a credible effort and event.

My response to our state of "field proficiency" is based largely on our learning curve. If one were to consider the standard of our performances from our first trial in 1993 as compared to those we stage today, there would be little doubt we have improved over the years. And we will continue to improve. So, let's start somewhere and just get better.

For the second question, I believe, as a budding offshoot of ECSCA, the benefits from organizing a National Championship might enhance our interpersonal contacts as we straddle our footing between our long time supporters, the various Springer Spaniel Field Trial groups, and our ECSCA friends, who have welcomed us from the start. We must understand neither the ECSCA nor the springer organizations need us. We need them. In the final analyses, the AKC will tell us, we are cockers, and that means we are ECSCA. The ECSCA has a long established tradition of doing things in a first class manner. The springer associations have the established Field Trial traditions we aspire towards. We must not let either of these organizations or traditions down.

It seems to me the biggest obstacle facing the decision to re-establish a National Championship, would be in our ability to sustain it year after year, and believe in our small community's heart we can endorse the winner of this prestigious competition as our National Champion. To achieve that goal, we the participants, bear the responsibility to 1) endorse the fairness of the competition, 2) insure the objectivity of the judges, 3) select grounds which truly

test our cockers total abilities, and 4) that every single individual, who has spent countless hours of time and money towards saving our field dogs from extinction, receives the right to have his opinion heard and considered while shaping this important event.

I didn't deliberately keep the early details I've now outlined secret, but as the idea of a CNC spread, everyone had an opinion or "vision". I was overwhelmed. The original proposal to the ECSCA Field Committee is over 50 pages long. It took a while to gather these ideas and organize them into areas of discussion so we could debate intelligently and resolve a position on various issues. As a summary, I present the following proposal to you which outlines parameters for a Cocker Championship for your consideration and comments in pretty much the order as they have been presented to the ECSCA Field Committee.

- #1. We would need a minimum number of qualified dogs, no less than 25, to stage a viable National Championship. Any fewer dogs would not be financially viable nor a true competition.
- #2. We have 41 qualified dogs if we go back to the first trial in 1993.
- #3. We should hold future CNC's every other year (or longer) until we had at least 25 qualified dogs.
- #4. The judges must be beyond reproach and have Cocker experience. Several Pages of the proposal discussed how we would select judges.
- #5. The field Trial should ideally be a 2 day event of at least 5 series and a water test.
- #6. The trial grounds must provide a variation of cover that would demonstrate any given Cocker's true ability on diversified cover. For example, series 1&2 on planted fields, 3&4 natural woodlands, series 5 heavy cover hedgerows. We would hold a final water test that must be passed to qualify as the National Champion. Several pages of the proposal were dedicated towards discussion of what constitutes as an appropriate test in which types of cover.
- #7. The authority and chain of command for

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Continued

sanctioning a CNC.

#8. Setting up future committees for staging a CNC.

#9. Banquet, trophy's, budget's entry fees.

#10. Catalogs, Advertisers.

In summary, the Field Committee has requested these parameters be submitted for your consideration and debate. There has been no firm decisions on any of the above subject matter. Even the question of 1997 versus 1998 still is undetermined.

As an update, in April, two members of the ECSCA Field Committee will visit possible Field Trial Grounds in Ohio as submitted by Jim Karlovec for the Championship. Kevin Martineau has also

expressed interest in submitting possible trial grounds in Minnesota for 1998, where we have had wonderful trials in the past. Further, Mark Rose has identified 2,700 acres of conservation lands near Chicago as a suitable site. We hope to hear of more exciting venues to evaluate.

So, on behalf of the ECSCA Field Committee, I solicit your ideas and support. We will accept all suggestions, pledges and volunteers. Please don't be shy! I suggest you submit your ideas in a format of the categories that we have outlined so we can clearly sort and address them.

Finally, I would like to say, let's make this effort an extension of our mutual devotion not just to our wonderful dogs which brought us all together, but to the wonderful friendships our dog's have introduced us to and the legacy we've inherited.

Vicky Thomas, Lomita, California
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee